1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

I have written elsewhere[1] that the Garchiroli zamindaris afford a typical example of the neglect of aboriginal interests by the District Council; I might truthfully add by the Government also. So far my tour had taken me into Jharapapra and Murumgaon only of these estates; my departure from Murumgaon to Garchiroli was to take me in 37 miles through parts of Rangi, Dhanora, Dudhmala, and Khutgaon zamindaris: I visited Erka in Rangi, Dhanora, Dudhmala and Chatgaon in Khutgaon.[2] At Murumgaon I met almost all the zamindars. Over most of their estates there was no school, hospital or veterinary dispensary, practically no wells had been sunk, and visits of touring public health and veterinary assistants had been rare. The zamindars told me that a number of former schools had been closed on the plea of low attendance, the reason for which was that the children, who knew no language but Maria Gondi, were bored by lessons in the alien Marathi, while the teachers, knowing no Gondi and hating exile in these forest tracts, frequently went sick, generally in name, but often in fact. At Dhanora I found a small school that had just been re-started by the District Council after being closed for six months because no teacher could be found; at last a local untrained Depressed Classes youth had been appointed and had seventeen pupils, of whom five were Marias: it was a dull, ineffective institution. The zamindar of Potegaon said that though two or three years before Government had made a grant for starting an aboriginal school at Potegaon the District Council had provided no teacher; he was paying for one from his own pocket. I have mentioned the private school at Jharapapra which the zamindar himself finances.

High hopes were placed by the first Congress Ministry of the province in the *Vidya Mandir* Act, which provided for a new type of school in villages, intended to pay its way from the produce of lands attached to the school as endowments, and from the yarn to be spun by the pupils whose basic crafts were to be spinning and perhaps agriculture. I saw two of these, for which the zamindars had provided land, at Erka and Chatgaon. The attendance at both was very small, and they were in all ways utterly alien to the Maria way of life. Erka was typical. The *Vidya Mandir* fields were over a mile from the *Mandir*, which in outward appearance was indistinguishable from any ordinary plains village school, even down to the faded Congress flag on the roof. The masters of these institutions bear the time-honoured designation of *guru*. Here,

[1] *The Aboriginal Problem*, pp. 377-8.
[2] The map references on *Ordnance Survey of India*, Qr. Inch Sheet 64D, are Murumgaon MQ5461, Erka MQ4262, Dhanora MQ3652, Dudhmala MQ2849 and Chatgaon MQ2046.

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874 [815] too, no caste Hindu had been forthcoming and the authorities had had to draw on the Depressed Classes to find a *guru*, who was a town-bred Mahar, knew no language but his Marathi mother-tongue and was utterly ignorant of aboriginal life and customs, though twenty-two of his thirty-three boys were Maria-speaking aboriginals. The boys were doing some listless spinning, a useless craft in an area where no cotton is grown. The raw cotton for spinning has to be carted from Chanda, miles away: not one of the boys will spin in after-life. I asked if they could sing: the *guru* switched them from spinning on to droning out in a dreary, nasal tone a Marathi song which meant nothing to them. Helped by their parents, I tried to get the boys to sing a Maria song and dance a Maria dance, but their spontaneity had been so quenched by the alien ideas of the *Vidya Mandir* that even with their parents' help they were too shy or shamefaced to attempt their own wonderful tribal songs and dances. There was nothing in their whole curriculum which bore any relation to their tribal culture or appealed to the tribal imagination. Even the *Vidya Mandir* fields were so far from the village that the boys never visited them or learnt modern agricultural methods from the *jamadar* in charge, who merely grew rice to meet the cost of this useless institution. It was worse than useless, for it was detribalizing the boys, making them ashamed of their own way of life, and giving them nothing in return: it was no surprise that in this village all were peculiarly reticent as to the existence of a *gotul*, and that the latter was a moribund affair.

114 This completes the picture of my tour to Chanda Maria country, so far it has been possible to reconstruct it from the printed record of *The Aboriginal Problem* and from memory. Ethnologically the Note is somewhat meagre in its information. The impression, however, that I carry in my mind of the Chanda Marias is of a tribal culture still vigorous in its institutions and its arts, still knitting together the ways of life of a vigorous tribe closely akin on the one side to the Marias and Murias of Bastar, on the other side to the Raj-Gond and other tribes of northern and western Chanda, and of Milabad. What differences there are between the Chanda Marias and the Hill and other Marias of Bastar and the Murias of north Bastar and Kanker, only detailed field-work can define. It is an admirable theatre for such field-work, and the time for it is running short, since the Marias of Chanda are exposed, in a way that no Bastar tribes are exposed, to the impacts of modern Indian civilization. Of particular interest would be an investigation of my theory that the social organization of the plains Marias of Chanda was fundamentally similar to that of the Hill Marias and Murias of Bastar but has been overlaid with god-grouping and other ideas inherent in the social organization of